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BOOK REVIEWS

MODERN AMERICAN PLAYS. Collected, with Introduction, by George P. Baker, Professor of Dramatic Literature, Harvard University. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1920. Pp. x, 544.

REPRESENTATIVE AMERICAN PLAYS. Edited, with Introductions and Notes, by Arthur Hobson Quinn, The University of Pennsylvania. New York: The Century Company. 1920. Pp. 969.

REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS BY AMERICAN DRAMATISTS. Volumes I and III. Edited, with an Introduction to Each Play, by Montrose J. Moses. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. 1918 and 1921. Pp. 678 and 926.

MASTERPIECES OF MODERN SPANISH DRAMA. Edited, with a Preface, by Barrett H. Clark. Cincinnati: Stewart Kidd Company. 1922. Pp. vii, 290.

Any examination of dramatic anthologies that touch or includeactable modern material must tend to justify the opinion of such different men as Hardy and Maeterlinck that the closet or subjective drama is now to have its full right and opportunity, despite Professor Quinn's contention that "its significance is slight compared to that of the acted play". After all, what is a drama? A play is not great *first of all* because it isactable, but because it is finely imagined and capably created. We are beginning to suspect playhouse plausibility. A drama is, indeed, a selective, intensified imitation or reproduction of human experience, in which the social significance of motives, actions, consequences, and individual interrelations is woven into a perceptible pattern by means of words, tones, gestures, postures, and the play of features. But it does not always require a concrete theatre. A play which I see presented upon the stage, thinks Maeterlinck, seems to me always a lie. An æsthetic lie, he means, and he means, too, that the cultured imagination provides for itself a far more satisfactory stage than can any theatre.

"N'est-il pas évident que le Macbeth ou l'Hamlet que nous voyons sur la scène ne ressemble pas au Macbeth ou à l'Hamlet du livre? Qu'il a visiblement retrogradé dans le sublime? . . . *Lear, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Antoine et Cléopâtre*, ne peuvent être représentés, et il est dangereux de les voir sur la scène. Quelque chose d'Hamlet est mort pour nos du jour où nous l'avons vu mourir sous nos yeux.

Le spectre d'un acteur l'a détrôné, et nous ne pouvons plus écarter l'usurpateur de nos rêves."

Whoever saw, indeed, a finally or even a largely satisfying Hamlet?¹ Peacock tells us of Shelley that, with one exception, "I do not remember his having been pleased with any performance at an English theatre."

This dramatic pattern of which we have spoken is not indeed the pattern of life itself (which is much too involved to be identifiable), but resembles and suggests life, as a leaf suggests a tree, a tree a forest, a forest a landscape. It is mimic, miniature life, packed with elastic symbols which the reader's or spectator's sympathetic imagination may expand at will.

Modern American Plays is a disappointing collection. It contains five dramas: *As a Man Thinks*, by Augustus Thomas; *The Return of Peter Grimm*, by David Belasco; *Romance*, by Edward Sheldon; *The Unchastened Woman*, by Louis K. Ansbacher; and *Plots and Playwrights*, by Edward Massey. None of these has any claim to greatness of conception or of treatment, although the plays of Mr. Belasco and Mr. Sheldon show a good deal of practical craftsmanship. The other three rest back fatiguedly on a dead level of mere mediocre cleverness, nor does their surface brilliance possess even freshness or originality, while as social thesis plays they get us nowhere. *The Return of Peter Grimm*, while, like the rest, constructed rather than created, does possess a fine sincerity of tone and worth of characterization.

Professor Quinn's volume was first published in October, 1916, but is now revised in its annotations and bibliography. It contains twenty-five plays, dating from 1767 to 1911. No play is included which has not had actual and professional stage representation. The editing is well done, but we can hardly agree that all the plays "justify themselves on the score of their intrinsic

¹ Professor Baker, in his Introduction to *Modern American Plays*, rather gives the professional actor's case away when he affirms that "the drama is a collaborative art, and no rôle—even Hamlet or Lear—is seen at its best till an actor of such sensitiveness and matured technique plays it that not merely what the text obviously says, but its slightest implications are revealed." Can any actor go so far?

sis excellence". The collection is of far more value as a convenient source-book for the historical study of the drama in America than as an anthology of really meritorious material. With one or two exceptions, we think the contemporary material poorly chosen, but in the case of Clyde Fitch this was apparently unavoidable.

Mr. Moses's two portly volumes are the first and third of a series which covers more elaborately the same field. In the first volume, embracing the Colonial and Revolutionary sections, are included the three conspicuous plays that begin Professor Quinn's list,—Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia*, Tyler's *The Contrast*, and Dunlap's *André*, but Mr. Moses gives us eight eighteenth-century plays as against Professor Quinn's three. The bibliographies and perhaps too laudatory editorial introductions are, in general, painstaking, and the portraits of authors and reproductions of original title-pages add much to the reader's interest. In their selections the two editors agree on only four of the plays written since 1855 (of which four, Boker's *Francesca da Rimini*, discussed by Professor John C. Metcalf in *THE SEWANEE REVIEW* for January, 1921, is easily the best), but Professor Quinn includes specimens of the work of William Vaughn Moody and Percy MacKaye and Edward Sheldon, all of whom should have been represented, we think, in Mr. Moses's volume also, although Moody's acting plays will not endure as will his *The Masque of Judgment* and *The Fire-Bringer*. Langdon Mitchell's nervously flippant play, *The New York Idea*, might have been advantageously omitted by both editors, and the work of Augustus Thomas, represented by both Professors Baker and Quinn, and by Mr. Moses, however helped by stage glamor, is of dubious artistic sincerity. To put the matter frankly, the American dramatic genius has not as yet produced a play authentically great, although some of the contemporary one-act plays show growing power. There may be some psychological connection between this fact and American success in the field of the short-story.

Masterpieces of Modern Spanish Drama is a new edition of a very useful book that first appeared five years ago. It contains

three plays,—*The Great Galeoto*, by José Echeragay; *The Duchess of San Quentin*, by Benito Pérez-Galdós; and *Daniela*, by Angel Guimerà, the Catalan nationalist. If these men are not precisely modernists, at any rate they are transitionists. In point of resourceful knowledge of his art, Echeragay is chief of them, although he relies too much upon Calderon as his master in tragedy, losing thus in vitality what he gains in deviceful tradition. His work is at times overstrained and melodramatic, but he has written sparkling if somewhat unspontaneous comedy after Dumas and Scribe. *El Gran Galeoto*, like most of his work, is problem drama, but it has a sound enough psychology of event, if not always of character, and develops a really memorable *dénouement*. *The Duchess of San Quentin*, although obviously influenced by Ibsen, rather surprises by its socializing quality, for contemporary Spanish drama in general is capably realistic or finely poetic, rather than interested in social problems. The present play, however, has the touch, also characteristic of its time and group, of the conscientious technician. *Daniela* is a person-play of no little understanding, but suffering from a too palpable manufacture of 'situations'. The editorial addenda are concise and appropriate, but we regret that one of the fine plays of Jacinto Benavente could not have been included. G. H. C.

MARY STUART. By John Drinkwater. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1921. Pp. 73.

OLIVER CROMWELL. By John Drinkwater. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1921. Pp. 96.

SEEDS OF TIME. By John Drinkwater. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1922. Pp. 68.

Although Mr. Drinkwater is only forty years old, he has already more than a score of books—poems, plays and critical essays—to his credit. He is, of course, best known in America by his drama, *Abraham Lincoln*, which, despite all adverse criticism, remains an excellent person-play in point of total impression. Mr. Drinkwater properly yet almost superfluously explains his purpose as that of the dramatist, not of the historian, nor of the political philosopher. The same explanation is applicable to his